

**ADULT LITERACY COMMITTEE MEETING
OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
11/16/05**

MINUTES

Members Present: J. Warner, M. Bueno, A. Gibbs, J. MarcAurele, G. Nee, R. Paniccia

Members Absent: R. Nangle

Staff Present: M. McGetrick, M. McDowell

Others Present: J. Uvin, J. Titzel

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM by Chair J. Warner. He stated that the committee would recap the Governor's Adult Literacy Task Force recommendations. A copy of the full report named "Critical Links" was included in the material distributed to committee members. The committee will discuss, in general outline broad strokes terms, where the committee wants to head and how their work links with other key areas of functioning within state government and the Rhode Island economy, particularly links between the adult literacy system, K-12 system, post-secondary education systems and the workforce and economic development systems. Those links are particularly important and is, in fact, why this committee exists.

What needs to be accomplished is to truly create a system out of a patchwork of not always well connected individual providers, many of whom are doing outstanding work but are not really connected as part of a larger system.

Chair J. Warner stated that as the Commissioner of Higher Education, his Board's single goal is to take a look at educational attainment of Rhode Islanders and how that positions us to function in the economy of today. You can't look at educational attainment solely on the basis of who earns Master, Doctorate or Bachelor degrees, you really have to look along the entire continuum of education attainment to figure out how you can improve the whole pipeline.

Comments given by other committee members supported the notion of a truly connected streamlined system.

Chair J. Warner asked Mr. J.Uvin to report on the key recommendations of the Governor's Adult Literacy Task Force. Some of the recommendations were to consolidate adult basic education state staff in one state agency; to adequately staff the agency; create a forum for interagency collaboration around the funding and delivery of adult basic education services to include the appropriate departments; and develop a comprehensive state-wide professional development system. The remaining two recommendations had to do with the development of standards for the system and for the collection of data.

One important point discussed was the lack of good data. Programs which receive Federal funds have basic reporting requirements. At the present time, we don't have data showing at what level students are coming in and what progress was made. Relevant to the data availability and quality issue, Mr. Uvin is working closely with a number of people to issue a request for bids to purchase a web base system to collect needed data.

Another goal discussed was to create a system that is convenient and easy whereby a client wishing to explore the scope of possibilities could, once he has identified a program, be able to determine how long he would have to wait to access the program.

A brief discussion ensued around the issue of Adult Literacy teachers. There is a shortage, but the reasons why are not entirely understood. One explanation may be that teachers are not paid enough. Many teachers work part-time with no benefits, with no professional development or stability.

To sum up, Chair J. Warner stated that most of the discussion addressed policy and implementation issues. The question of infrastructure was raised, data reporting, qualifications and professional development for the instructors, interaction with other entities, common standards and common ways to access students and connect. Conceptually, those issues have been addressed to some degree. The question for the group is what are the best starting points, where do we sequence that, and how does the committee move.

The question was raised by A. Gibbs on whether we were able to identify the population who wanted to access an Adult Literacy Program, and do we know what that number is. J. Uvin reported that he worked with a group of colleagues at the Center for Labor Studies in Boston on this issue, and had data available by city and town, and could have it sent to the committee.

Chair J. Warner stated that it would be great to design a system where a client with a GED could now take advantage of opportunities and doors opened that were once closed before. Another feature of this system would be the data reporting end of it, where we would then get a better picture of the 10,000 participants, where they are in the system, what happened to them, something about their success or lack of it, in the form of outcomes, which could be linked to other data systems.

M. Bueno talked about the competitiveness of organizations. It is very complex because the programs rely on grant money received through a bidding process. They are very reluctant to share information.

J. Uvin stated that there is no funding formula in place that takes into account the intensity of services.

Chair J. Warner encouraged members to look at the problem statement and other documents included in the packet, and make suggestions directly to J. Uvin to incorporate into the document. He stated there was a lot of emphasis in the discussion on having

programs respond to a new structure of rewards that are designed to change behavior. The question of contents standards was seen as a starting place to do that. J.Uvin reported that this would be in place by June 30, 2006. MIS and the professional development piece is being worked on. He reported that there was an opportunity and probably the expectation, through the pending reauthorization of Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, to create a five-year plan for adult education in the state.

J. Uvin felt that the area the committee needs to give serious thought to is the whole notion of integration between adult education, workforce development and higher education.

In closing, Chair J. Warner stated that a good system should have significant work based components to it. The committee needs to think how these components fit into the larger system, be able to step back and identify gaps, and then decide how to fill those gaps. He then mentioned a draft of expectations for moving ahead that J. Uvin had produced. He urged committee members to digest it and then offer comments as to where they see things moving.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha McDowell